

of Buddha that she preserved her chastity. She used to collect herbs every day and serve them to the Most Venerable Gyōgi.

One day she went to the mountain to collect herbs and saw a large snake swallowing a big frog. She entreated the snake, "Please set the frog free for my sake." But the snake would not. She entreated again, saying, "I will become your wife if you do me the favor of letting the frog go." On hearing that, the large snake raised its head high to see her face and disgorged the frog. Whereupon she said to the snake, "Come to me in seven days."

On the appointed day, she hid herself in the house with all the openings closed. The snake came as expected and knocked on the wall with its tail. The next morning, terrified, she went to her master, who lived at the mountain temple of Ikoma.<sup>5</sup> He said to her, "You cannot break your promise. Only be strict in observing the precepts." Therefore, she reaffirmed her faith in the Three Treasures and her acceptance of the five precepts,<sup>6</sup> and returned home.

On the way she met a strange old man with a big crab. She said, "Who are you, old man? Will you please set the crab free for me?" He answered, "I am Edoi no Nimaro 畫問邇麻呂 from Uhara district, Settsu province 攝津國兔原郡.<sup>7</sup> At the age of seventy-eight I had neither sons to depend upon nor the means of making a living. In Naniwa I happened to find this crab. I cannot give it to you, for I have promised it to someone." She took off her robe, begging him to sell her the crab in exchange for her robe, but he would not listen. She then took off her skirt to add to its price, and he finally agreed to her offer. Thereupon, she brought the crab back home<sup>8</sup> and invited the Most Venerable Gyōgi to hold a service for it, setting it free with a prayer.<sup>9</sup> Impressed with her deed, the master exclaimed, "How noble! How good!"

That evening the snake came back again, climbed to the roof, and dropped into the house by pulling off part of the thatched roof. The terrified girl heard something jumping and flapping around in her

5. Ikoma-yamadaira 生馬山寺 or Chikurin-ji 竹林寺, at present Arisato in Ikoma-chō, Ikoma-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣生駒町有里, the site of Gyōgi's tomb.

6. When a man becomes a Buddhist, he professes his faith in the Three Treasures and observes the five precepts, namely, no killing, no stealing, no adultery, no lying, and no drinking. See Chap. I (1), d, n. 88.

7. Present Muko-gun, Hyōgo-ken 兵庫縣武庫郡.

8. The *Sanhō ekotoba* gives a different reading: "... she went back to the temple with the crab ..." which makes more sense than going back home and inviting Gyōgi to her home.

9. When a devotee buys and frees captive fish or birds, he usually invites a Buddhist monk to perform proper rites (放生會 *hōjō-e*). This practice was regarded as a deed of great merit and observed in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan. See I, 7, n. 12. For 咒願 prayer, see III, 38, n. 35.

bed, and the next morning she found a big crab and a large snake that had been chopped into pieces. Then she realized that the crab she had liberated had come to her rescue out of gratitude. This was also due to the virtue gained by keeping the precepts. Although she wanted to unravel the mystery and tried to identify the old man, she could not find him. It was evident he was an incarnation of Buddha. This is a miraculous event.

## 9

### *On Being Born in the Form of an Ox and Made to Work for Usurping the Properties of the Temple of One's Own Dedication<sup>1</sup>*

Ōtomo no Akamaro 大伴赤麻呂<sup>2</sup> was the governor of Tama district, Musashi province 武藏國多磨郡.<sup>3</sup> He died on the nineteenth of the tenth month, in the first year of the Tenpyō shōhō era,<sup>4</sup> and was reborn as a black-spotted calf on the seventh of the fifth month in the second year of the same era, with an inscription on its skin.<sup>5</sup> It could be made out as follows:

"Akamaro dedicated the temple he had built, took liberties with the properties of the temple, and died without paying for them. He was born as an ox to atone for this."

Both his family and friends were led to reflect on themselves and were extremely horrified. They realized how terrible it was to commit such a sin which was bound to be accompanied by retribution. On the first of the sixth month in the same year, this fact was made public for they thought that such an event should be recorded as an example for posterity.<sup>6</sup>

I hope that even those who have nothing of which to repent will read this story, set right their minds, and practice good. Even if you suffer from hunger and drink hot molten copper, never touch the properties of a temple. There is an old saying, "Honeydew in the

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 21).

2. Unknown, but there were a number of Ōtomo families in Musashi.

3. See II, 3, n. 3.

4. 749.

5. Probably black spots that looked like an inscription.

6. According to Torao Toshiya, the date falls on the day when Akamaro's family and friends offered the account of this event to the temple. See *Nihon ryōiki* (NBKT, 70), 205.



present is an iron ball in the future.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, we learn that the law of karmic causation never fails. We should be ever mindful of that and behave ourselves. Thus the *Daijiki-kyō*<sup>8</sup> says: “Those who steal from the samgha commit a sin graver than the five sins . . .”<sup>9</sup>

## IO

### *On the Death Penalty for Constantly Boiling and Eating Birds' Eggs*<sup>1</sup>

In the village of Shimoanashi, Izumi district, Izumi province 和泉國和泉郡下蒲脚村,<sup>2</sup> there was a youth<sup>3</sup> whose name is unknown. Innately evil, he did not believe in the law of karmic causation and used to hunt birds' eggs to boil and eat.

In the third month in the spring of the first year of the horse, the sixth year of the Tenpyō shōhō era, a strange soldier came to him and said, “I was sent to get you by a provincial official.”<sup>4</sup> He had a plate four feet long<sup>5</sup> fastened to his waist. So they went off together, and, when they came to the village of Yamatae in Hitada district 纒郡山直里,<sup>6</sup> they made their way into a field covered with several acres of wheat two feet tall. The youth saw the field all aflame and it was too full of embers for him to put his feet down. Running about in the field, he wailed, “It's hot, it's hot.”

It happened that a villager was collecting firewood on the hill. As he saw the boy running and falling down and heard his wailing, he came down from the hill and tried to stop him, but the boy resisted. Nonetheless, the villager tried hard to catch the boy until he was able to pull him out of the enclosure. The boy fell to the ground without a word.

7. See I.30, n. 22.

8. *Daijōdō daijiki-kyō* (*Taishō*, XIII, No. 397).

9. This quotation is the preceding line of the quotation in I.20, n. 12.

1. Cf. *Myōōki* (III), On Emperor Wu of the Chou dynasty 周武帝, and on a boy, *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (IX, 24; XX, 30). This story is based on the folk etymology of the local name Anashi 蒲脚, which literally means “sore legs,” dressed in the Buddhist clothing of karmic retribution.

2. Present Izumi-ōtsu-shi, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府和泉大津市.

3. 中男 *chūnan*, a boy between the ages of seventeen and twenty (*Yōra-ryō*, “Ko-ryō,” Article 6); after 757, between ages eighteen and twenty-one (*Shoku Nihongi*, Tenpyō hōji 1:4:4).

4. 國司 *kuni no tsukasa*.

5. 札 *funda*, a writ of summons on a wooden plate.

6. In present Kishiwada-shi, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府岸和田市.

After a while he woke up and groaned in pain, saying, “Oh, my sore feet!” The villager asked him, “Why did you behave like that?” He replied, “A soldier came to take me and forced me to step on embers so hot that I felt as if my feet had been boiled. Looking around, I found myself surrounded by mountains of fire without any way out and so I was crying and running about.” Hearing this, the villager rolled up the boy's pants and looked at his legs. The flesh was all gone and nothing was left but the bones. He died the next day.

Now we are sure of the existence of hell in this world. We should believe in the law of karmic retribution. We should not behave like a crow which loves its own chicks and eats others. Without compassion man is just like a crow. The *Nehan-gyō* 涅槃經<sup>7</sup> says: “Though there is a distinction in respectability between man and animal, they share the fact that they cherish life and take death gravely . . .” The *Zen'aku inga-kyō* 善惡因果經<sup>8</sup> contains a passage which gets right to the point: “The one who roasts and boils chickens in this life will fall into the Hell of the River of Ashes<sup>9</sup> after death.”

## II

### *On the Penalty of a Fatal Disease for Abusing a Monk and Committing a Lustful Deed*<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, nuns of Saya-dera 狹屋寺<sup>2</sup> in Kuwahara, Ito district, Kii province 紀伊國伊刀郡桑原, vowed to hold a service and invited a monk of Yakushi-ji<sup>3</sup> on the West Side of Nara, Dharma Master Daie 題惠 (popularly called Dharma Master Yosami 依網, for his secular name was Yosami no muraji),<sup>4</sup> to perform the rite of repentance<sup>5</sup> devoted to the Eleven-headed Kannon 十一面觀音.<sup>6</sup> It happened that a wicked man lived in that village. His surname

7. *Daihatsu nehan-gyō*, XX (*Taishō*, XII, 484b); see Chap. II(2)a, n. 65.

8. *Zen'aku inga-kyō* (*Taishō*, LXXXV, 1381). See Chap. II(1)c, n. 61.

9. 灰河地獄 Kega-jigoku, one of the sixteen subhells that belong to the eight Hells of Heat (see II.7, n. 24), in which scorching ashes flow.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVI, 38).

2. A nunnery which once existed at present Saya, Katsuragi-chō, Ito-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣伊都郡桑原町佐野.

3. See Editor's Preface, n. 4; also Chap. I(1)c.

4. The parenthesis is inserted by Kyōkai. Although nothing is known of Daie, the *Shinsen shōjiroku* cites Yosami as a family descended from kami in the capital or an immigrant family in Kawachi.

5. See Chap. II(1)a, nn. 5.

6. See Chap. II(3)b.